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The Personnel Problem in Jewish Education*

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THE personnel situation in Jewish education at the present time is critical. There are not enough competent teachers available to meet the demand created by increasing enrollments in Jewish schools. Nor are we in much better position with regard to supervisory and administrative personnel. We can appreciate how truly serious our plight is if we stop to consider that the future of our children and youth as Jews and the destiny of Jewish life in America will depend in large measure on our ability to devise effective means of solving this crucial problem.

Usually referred to as the shortage of teachers, the personnel problem is really much broader in scope than this designation would imply. In order to have a clear understanding of what is involved, it is necessary to be aware of the variety of factors in the situation, all of which are interrelated and interdependent.

Thus the shortage of personnel is in large measure due to the status which the teacher enjoys, social as well as economic. Another element to be reckoned with is the character of the teacher's function — the circumscribed nature of his activity under present circumstances and the limited opportunities which it offers for rendering significant service. Furthermore, the present methods and procedures used in recruiting and selecting members for the profession are found wanting. There is also the need for a more intimate relationship between the programs offered by

teacher education institutions and the task the teacher is called upon to perform. Moreover, the limited opportunities for systematic placement, for in-service growth, and for the advancement which comes with additional training and experience are further complicating factors in an already difficult situation. Finally, one must recognize that the shortage of personnel arises also out of causes that are deeply rooted in the general conditions of American life as well as in the contemporary setting and the traditions of American Jewry.

Hence the problem of personnel must be envisaged in its totality if we are to deal with it effectively. But, for purposes of clarifying the underlying issues, it is necessary to analyze the problem into its major component elements. These we see as four in number — the lack of a planned program of recruitment, the limited conception of the teacher's task and of the teacher education programs offered by our teachers' colleges, the absence of a coordinated plan of in-service education leading to professional growth, and the failure to accord the personnel in Jewish education an acceptable social and economic status.

The Shortage of Jewish Educational Personnel and the Need for a Program of Recruitment.

The shortage of teachers is not unique to the field of Jewish education. For some years now public education has had a similar problem, due largely to the growing child population, the tendency of young people in our day to extend the length of their stay in school, and the large turnover of public school teachers who, in many instances, forsake teaching because of mar-

* This article has been prepared in connection with the series of conferences sponsored by the American Association for Jewish Education on the personnel problem in Jewish education. Its purpose is to suggest avenues for exploration and generally to stimulate thinking in this vitally important area.

riage and the attraction of other occupations.

Because of the lack of teachers and the urgent need to attract young people to teaching as a career, there has been considerable recruitment activity in the field of public education. Many agencies have participated in this effort including the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools; their work has proved to considerable degree effective in arousing community interest and in helping to mitigate the gravity of the situation. To be sure, in spite of the concerted effort made to cope with it, the problem continues to assume large proportions since factors previously mentioned continue to exert their influence.

The personnel shortage in Jewish education is even more alarming and complicated. As a result it calls for planned recruitment efforts on the part of both national and local Jewish agencies having a vital stake in the problem and in position to make a contribution toward its solution. Since the basic causes for the scarcity of teachers are not dissimilar, there is much that we can learn from the successful recruitment methods and procedures that have already been developed in public education. In our consideration of the personnel shortage, it is also important to recognize that a planned program of recruitment can be effective only to the degree that we see it as an integral element in a program of broad scope having many ramifications.

Having indicated the need for planned recruitment efforts, what are some of the steps that might be taken by way of increasing the enrollment of young people in our teacher education institutions and of making available the supply of educational personnel needed by our Jewish schools?

As *incentives and motivations* we might develop on both a nation-wide and local community basis a program of financial aid, consisting of both tuition fee allotments and stipends for living expenses, to encourage young people (students of Hebrew in Jewish and public high schools

and in colleges, persons with Jewish background active in Jewish youth organizations, etc.) to enroll in teacher education programs. Wherever possible, such community aid should be made available on condition that recipients of scholarships accept positions in small communities for a minimum period of years following graduation and also function during student years as group workers and as counselors in camps that are community sponsored. We should, in addition, encourage communities to develop codes of personnel practices and to improve both the social and economic status of the teacher.*

In order to *exploit more fully the potential and existing personnel resources*, the following measures might be adopted: We could develop a national program of supplementary Jewish education for public school teachers, present and prospective, to equip them for part- or full-time teaching in the Jewish school. This program could be conducted either during their free hours while the school year is in progress or during vacation periods and might be undertaken either in the local community or on a regional or national basis. Each community or region would obviously adapt the program to suit its particular needs and conditions. In addition, consideration would be given to the possibility of utilizing in similar fashion the supervisory and administrative skills of Jewish principals of public schools.

We should also plan effectively for the maximum utilization of the services of Israeli teachers and students contemplating a period of residence in the United States to study in American colleges and universities. Such a program might involve the centralization of information in both Israel and America regarding the availability of personnel, their projected program of study, the cities in which they expect to attend school, the need for teaching personnel in various communities, etc. Orientation courses should be given in Israel prior to departure and in America

*This point is further developed in a later section of this article.

shortly after arrival for those intending to teach in American Jewish schools.

In order to make for the more efficient utilization of the services of the available teaching personnel, we might encourage wherever possible, in both large and small communities, the consolidation of Jewish schools—including those of a variety of religious groupings—especially under circumstances where the merging of schools would make for units conducive to greater educational efficiency.

Much could also be done by way of *improving both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of Jewish education*, and to attain this objective a national committee representing the various ideological and religious groupings might conceivably be appointed to study the matter and exert its influence in attaining such objectives as the increase of enrollment of pupils on the secondary level, the extension of the length of stay of pupils in the elementary Jewish school, the development of more favorable attitudes on the part of pupils and parents toward Jewish education and the profession of Jewish teaching, and the enhancement of the task of the teacher in the direction of making it more creative, significant, and satisfying.

In order further to *stimulate young people to become interested in Jewish teaching*, we might utilize such means as publishing a pamphlet literature on the nature of Jewish teaching as a profession and the opportunities it affords for significant service, organizing "Future Teacher" groups in high schools and colleges and involving their members in a program of activities that will induct them into the profession of Jewish teaching, and including in the curriculum of the Jewish school experiences and information about Jewish education and the profession of Jewish teaching.

The Need for a Broader Conception of the Teacher's Task and of Teacher Education.

Nowadays we do not conceive of the teacher's task as being limited to classroom teaching; modern education sees the

teacher's responsibilities extending into home and community as well. It is important, for example, for the teacher to maintain contacts with the parent for purposes of establishing effective home-school relations. He should seek to know as much as possible about the pupil and one of his major sources of information is the parent. The teacher also has a contribution to make in guiding the parent and in taking counsel with him so that the teachings of the school do not conflict with points of view that prevail in the home, and vice versa. Only by close contact can home and school supplement one another rather than work at cross purposes.

The teacher has a function to perform in the community as well where, like all of its other members, he should render services on a voluntary basis. He can be especially helpful in the performance of certain functions where he possesses the necessary skills to a greater extent than would be true of his Jewish fellow-citizens. Also, in the performance of his normal teaching duties, he will at times want to introduce community resources into the school in order to render the pupil's learning activities more meaningful and effective; on other occasions he will see to it that his pupils have direct contacts with the community and learn firsthand of its activities, needs, and problems and perhaps render assistance from time to time in areas where children and youth are in position to make a contribution.

As one additional factor in considering the need for extending the scope of the teacher's responsibility, it is necessary to point out that our work in Jewish education can be effective only if we conceive of it as applying to all age levels, to youth and adults as well as to pre-school and elementary school pupils. Were such an all-embracing program of Jewish education to become generally accepted, or even the necessary first steps taken to bring it about, it would have as a concomitant outcome the opening up of vast opportunities for the professional personnel in Jewish education. Converting Jewish teaching

into a full-time responsibility would then no longer be a problem, for every Jewish school and community would be making more demands upon the teacher's time than he would find it possible to satisfy.

It is important for us to bear in mind that there is also an economic reason why it becomes necessary to think in terms of broadening the teacher's function. There exists today a tendency on the part of schools to curtail the daily hours of instruction, thus limiting the teacher's program of work and rendering it impractical to pay salaries that would make for a reasonably dignified standard of living. This development makes it necessary for the teacher to engage in ancillary tasks related to the program of the school, the synagogue or center, or the community at large. In thus extending the range of the teacher's activities, it is important to give careful thought to the kinds of tasks that are appropriate for him to undertake in which creditable performance may be reasonably anticipated.

In preparing the teacher properly for the work he is to do, we should obviously want to reckon with the specific functions that he is called upon to perform. But equally important in developing the program of teacher education is the basic question of the teacher image, involving as it does our entire conception of Jewish education and the part it is to play in the lives of our children, youth, and adults.

The person who intends to become a Jewish teacher should have a wide and deep understanding of the Jewish community, its needs, and problems as well as broad social intelligence about the changing world in which we live. He should be familiar with the past experiences of the Jewish people and conversant with the values they have cherished through the generations. The teacher should also have a deep sympathy for childhood with its particular interests and problems and be ready and willing to stimulate, encourage, and guide children and youth, always reckoning with their stage of readiness and level of maturity.

The institution which undertakes to educate teachers for Jewish schools should have this broad conception of the teacher's role and develop its program accordingly. Only to the degree that it approximates the criteria for a Jewish teacher set forth above will the teachers' college discharge its responsibility and make it possible for the Jewish school to succeed in its efforts.

Now what are some of the suggestions that we might consider in trying to build up our teacher image and in developing a program of teacher education to provide the type of teacher who can meet the needs and requirements of American Jewish life?

The *scope of the teacher's task* needs to be defined in broader terms so as to include: remedial work with children; the development of instructional materials; promotion of effective home-school relations, i.e., parent education and home visitation; participation in library, day camp, and club activity; and teaching classes of young people and adults.

The *program of teacher education* should be so developed that it bears more directly on the needs of the pupils and the community, and the scope of curriculum offerings should be so broadened as to make adequate provision for preparing future teachers for the proper performance of the related functions previously mentioned. Thus, along with the Jewish content areas, professional courses in the philosophy of education, child development, methods of teaching, home-school-community relationships should be given proper emphasis in the teacher education program. Then, too, provision should be made by the teachers' colleges for the student to obtain a year of study in Israel, a summer experience in a children's camp, a semester's experience as a group worker in a center, a fairly extended contact with a social agency, and a year of observation and student teaching. Experiences should also be provided which would cultivate in our future teachers the skills that would enable them to foster democratic procedure in the classroom, to encourage a

large measure of pupil-teacher planning, to introduce cooperative procedures in learning, etc.

In addition, in order to make certain that the professional phases of the teacher's education are adequately provided for, we might give some consideration to utilizing the four successive summers during the student's years of attendance at the teachers' colleges to adding those professional aspects of his education which the colleges find it difficult to include in their programs. Under these circumstances, all students could be assembled at one centrally chosen location with tuition and living expenses provided for them by their communities. Members of the faculties of the teachers' colleges would also be invited to be present.

Once such a center was created, the opportunity would also exist for initiating an intensive in-service education program for Jewish teachers and for supplementing the education of public school teachers who aim to qualify for posts in the various types of Jewish schools and centers.

By way of *administrative measures designed to improve programs of teacher education*, we might consider higher requirements for admission, graduation, and certification; preparation of needed instructional materials for teacher education; development of cooperative relationships between teacher education institutions and also between the latter and the general colleges and universities; establishment of demonstration schools and the development of programs of experimentation; periodic meetings of various types of college teachers for the discussion of common problems and for the ongoing clarification of their function; and the improvement of relationships between the personnel responsible for the pre-service education of teachers and the teaching, administrative, and supervisory personnel in the field.

We might also consider the establishment of a nationally sponsored teacher education institution that would integrate the general and the Jewish elements in the

program of teacher education, serve as a model institution for the education of teachers, and operate a demonstration school for providing a community-centered education of the Jewish child. Conceivably the program in this institution might be expanded to offer the education needed for all of the various types of Jewish community workers. Deserving students who might wish to prepare for a career in Jewish education and other forms of Jewish community service should be offered scholarships and stipends to enable them to enroll in this institution.

Finally, we might plan periodic conferences and workshops for the administrators of teachers' colleges and for teachers of education in these schools, together with representatives of professional teachers' groups, supervisory and administrative leaders in the field, and college student and alumni groups, for purposes of evaluating and improving current programs of teacher education.

Developing a Program for the In-Service and Professional Growth of the Personnel in Jewish Education.

The importance of growth in the pursuit of a calling is generally recognized as being indispensable to the satisfactions that one's labors afford. But it is doubtful whether there is any occupation in which an even deeper and wider comprehension of the task one is called upon to perform is as essential as it is in teaching. The very personality of the teacher appears to be affected if he does not extend his understanding of children and youth and of the entire process of education and if he does not, in addition, gain increased command of the subject matter areas which constitute the content of his teaching. He tends under these circumstances to develop into a discontented and unhappy individual and his efforts as a result become sterile and ineffective. Moreover, there must be, as an accompaniment to his growth while in service and to the satisfactions that come with successful effort, the opportunities for promotion to positions which make

greater demands upon his talents and skills.

We must therefore make certain that in Jewish education the possibilities for growth exist for all those professionally engaged in it. Where programs having this objective are developed, whether in a single school or in the community at large, they should arise out of the current needs of teachers, be developmental and not sporadic in character, and reflect a unity and consistency of purpose. Some bureaus of Jewish education have, with varying degrees of success, set up in-service teacher education programs. We must seek to improve these programs but also to concern ourselves with the problem of the teacher in communities where no bureaus of education exist. A definite need is thus indicated for programs of creative supervision in particular schools along with planned efforts for developing regional institutes and workshops to provide also for the in-service growth of teachers in small and non-bureau communities.

But, in considering the problem of in-service education, it is above all essential to realize that an effective program presupposes a Jewish school curriculum that enables the teacher to do a significant piece of work affecting vitally the lives of children. Only where such is the case will he be stimulated and challenged to keep abreast of new developments in educational theory and practice and in the content areas of Jewish learning.

Some of the suggestions that might be made for *promoting the in-service growth of the teacher*, in addition to those already mentioned, are as follows:

Teacher participation should be enlisted in curriculum planning, the creation of instructional materials, experimentation with new methods and content, the determination of school policy, the evaluation of the school program, etc.

Local and regional workshops and educational conferences should be organized having as their purpose the stimulation of teachers to keep abreast of new developments, to learn new skills and techniques,

to read professional literature, to join with their colleagues in efforts to improve the status of their profession, and to become active in community functions, especially those that have educational implications and provide the stimulus for creative expression.

Opportunities should be provided for teachers to take courses relating to their teaching functions or leading to a position of increased responsibility, to join educational tours to Israel and other countries, to serve as counselors in summer camps, to receive the necessary preliminary training that will enable them to engage in group work in a Jewish community or synagogue center.

For additional stimulation to Jewish educational personnel, exhibits of recently created educational materials should be arranged at the various annual educational workshops and conferences, i.e., the National Council for Jewish Education, the Educators Assembly, the national rabbinical conferences, etc.

And finally, the need for creative supervision and a group approach to supervision should be stressed and schools and communities should be prevailed upon to engage principals, educational directors, and supervisors to provide the necessary leadership.

As a means of *developing a corps of trained supervisory personnel*, there should be carefully designed programs in the teachers' colleges for the education of the principal, the educational director, and the supervisor, and inducements should be offered to experienced and capable teachers to enroll in such programs.

In order to promote greater efficiency both in *meeting the need for supervisory personnel* and in selecting for each position the person best equipped to fill it, careful consideration should be given to the organization and coordination of placement services, both locally and nationally.

Improving the Economic and Social Status of the Teacher.

For the teacher to be effective, he must

feel reasonably secure in his position, obtain adequate remuneration both in the form of salary and fringe benefits, have status in the community, enjoy the recognition and appreciation of his labors by both parents and children and, as a result of rendering meritorious service, be able to look forward to promotion in his chosen calling. A profession which does not provide such satisfactory working conditions is not likely to attract to its midst a sufficient number of capable and qualified people. Moreover, those entering the profession may exhibit a considerable amount of instability as evidenced by excessive turnover and mobility. As far as the task confronting us is concerned, it is necessary to consider the extent to which the profession of Jewish education offers the teacher opportunities for enjoying a satisfactory social, economic, and professional status.

The proposals that might be made for *improving the status of the teacher are in the areas of the social, the economic, and the professional*, or in a combination of one or more of these.

A model code of professional practices should be developed for defining the teacher's task specifically and setting forth the compensation therefor: salary (minimum, maximum, increments, cost of living adjustments); fringe benefits (social security, retirement annuities, life insurance, health insurance, leaves of absence); teacher tenure; duties and responsibilities of the teacher (hours of instruction, extra-curricular activities, staff meetings, parent-teacher relations, etc.); miscellaneous (length of school year, vacations, holidays, etc.).

Wherever possible arrangements should be made for the employment of teachers by the bureau of Jewish education or the community rather than by a particular school, thereby making it more feasible to provide the above-mentioned welfare benefits and to utilize the teacher's time to a maximum degree in situations where the particular school is not in position to engage the teacher on a full-time basis.

Also, where a school or community can-

not provide a teacher with a full program of work, provision might be made to have the teacher employed jointly by two neighboring communities or by two institutions within the same community.

The qualifications for administrative and supervisory positions in Jewish education should be defined specifically in order that practitioners in the field of Jewish education might have more specific information than at present exists concerning the type of education needed to qualify for positions of leadership.

Improvement in the social status of the teacher might be effected by urging communities to adopt such practices as including teachers as members of school committees or boards of education, giving teachers recognition for outstanding service, creating opportunities for teachers to be active in Jewish community affairs and to assume leadership roles in the community, according teachers a voice in the formulation of educational policy, stimulating teachers to help one another and to engage in a type of group supervision, encouraging free social intercourse between teachers and lay members of the community, and providing opportunities for teachers to represent the community on appropriate occasions.

The development of sound educational programs in terms of pupil needs, interests, and concerns, on the one hand, and Jewish community needs and requirements, on the other, should have the effect of increasing the significance of the teacher's task, result in more substantial pupil achievement, and add to the satisfactions derived by both pupils and teacher.

Academic freedom should be guaranteed by allowing for a broad Jewish orientation and not expecting the teacher to reflect the particular interpretation of Judaism held by the institution which at the moment avails itself of his services.

Finally, the teaching profession might be strengthened by the organization of a national Jewish Education Association to embrace the entire profession, providing at the same time for departmental asso-

ciations based on specialized interests.

Having analyzed the personnel problem in Jewish education, we see how far afield it takes us and how intimately interrelated are its many facets and ramifications. The conclusion to which we are inexorably led is that we are not likely to be successful in coping with a particular phase of the problem such, for example, as the personnel shortage, unless we see it in its proper context and then proceed, in our attempt to solve it, to deal with the variety of factors that are in some measure involved. It will be noted also that the proposals offered tend in considerable measure to overlap, since a remedy in one area will exert its influence in several others. We need but cite the one example of how the improvement of the program of the Jewish school will tend to make the teacher's task more meaningful, will improve the teacher's attitude toward his

work, be conducive to his professional growth, serve to stimulate him to further achievement and perhaps advancement in the profession, raise the level of his social status, attract more young people to the profession, etc. Thus we set up a type of chain reaction in which the improvement in one factor in the situation has its effect on all the others. There can therefore be no doubt about the desirability of our attacking this problem on a broad front.

The analysis of the personnel problem made in this article will have performed a useful function if it serves as a basis for the further deliberation that will take place in the series of conferences on the subject scheduled to be held in the very near future. If these conferences, in turn, result in some significant achievement, a great step forward will have been taken in resolving the most troublesome situation with which all those having a stake in Jewish education, both lay and professional people, are currently confronted.